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ABSTRACT

This paper contains addresses from a Florida State Dividion of Curriculum and Instruction staff session on the middle school. Participants sought to acquire an overall view of the theoretical concept of the middle school, its status in the educational organization, its student population characteristics, and its special requirements with respect to teacher education programs. A selected bibliography is included. (MLF)

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POST-SESSION REPORT:

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

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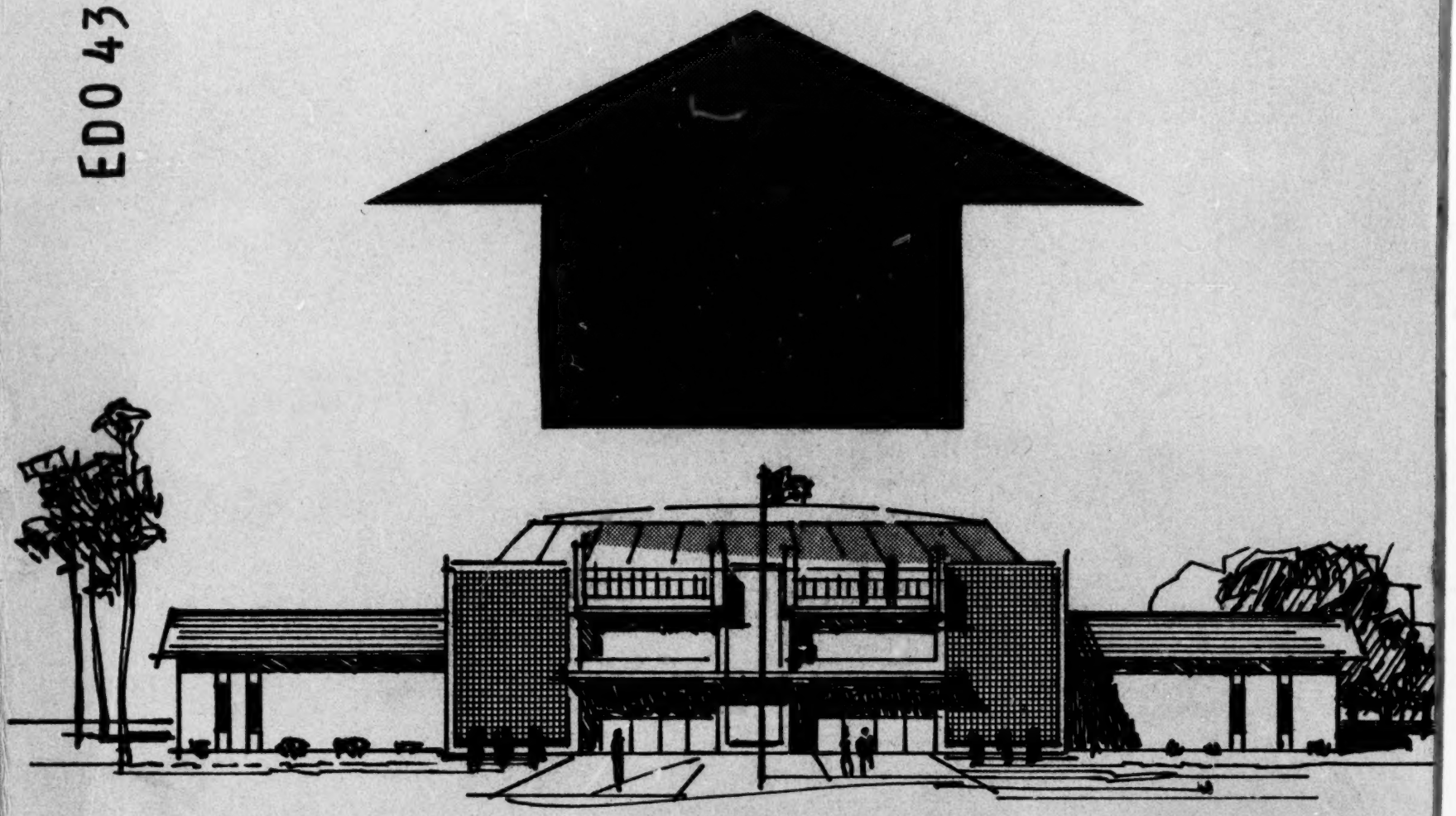

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MAY 27, 1969

LARSON BUILDING
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

Sponsored by
DIVISION OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
DR. JOSEPH W. CRENSHAW
Assistant Commissioner

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The Division of Curriculum and Instruction staff session on the middle school was coordinated by Ione L. Perry, Associate, Program Development. The report of this conference was compiled by Dr. Perry with the special assistance of Cynthia Perkins, Staff Editor. The cover was designed by Bruce Wallace, Graphics Section, Division of Curriculum and Instruction.

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PREFACE

During the past decade concerned educators have become increasingly aware of the special needs of the young adolescent, i.e., the child in the middle years of the twelve year school organization. Florida has been instrumental in pioneering the concept of the middle school with its potential for providing a successful transition from the elementary to the senior high school.

The purpose of this conference is to give our staff the opportunity to further explore this significant trend in contemporary education. Although we cannot expect to learn all there is to know about the middle school at this meeting, we can seek an overall view of its theoretical concept, its status, its student population characteristics, and its special requirements in teacher education programs. We are fortunate in having some of the nation's outstanding authorities readily available to provide enlightened, intelligent leadership in our investigation.

I hope that this meeting will be meaningful to us as we continue to search for new ways to provide the finest educational opportunities possible for the children of our state.

J. W. Crenshaw

Joseph W. Crenshaw
Assistant Commissioner

Table of Contents

Preface i

Table of Contents ii

Program iii

Greetings from Florida's Commissioner of Education
The Honorable Floyd T. Christian 1

Background of the Middle School Movement
Dr. William Alexander 3

Characteristics and Desired Behaviors of the
Middle School Child
Dr. Mary F. Compton 11

The Middle School Teacher
Dr. Ronald Kealy 18

Teacher Education Advisory Council Task Force
on the Middle School
Jack Gant 30

The Middle School: A Selected Bibliography 33

PROGRAM

LARSON BUILDING

Tallahassee, Florida
May 27, 1969

Tuesday, 9:30-10:15	FIRST GENERAL SESSION
Presiding:	Dr. Joseph W. Crenshaw, Assistant Commissioner, Division of Curriculum and Instruction
Greetings:	The Honorable Floyd T. Christian, Commissioner, State Department of Education
Address:	Background of the Middle School Movement Dr. William Alexander, Professor of Education, University of Florida, Gainesville
10:15-10:45	COFFEE
10:45-12:00	SECOND GENERAL SESSION
Presiding:	Mrs. Blanche McMullen, Consultant, Elementary Education, Division of Curriculum and Instruction
Address:	Characteristics and Desired Behaviors of the Middle School Child Dr. Mary Compton, Assistant Professor, College of Education, University of Georgia, Athens
12:00-1:30	LUNCH
1:30-2:30	THIRD GENERAL SESSION
Presiding:	Dr. Paul Fitzgerald, Director, Pupil Personnel, Division of Curriculum and Instruction
Address:	The Middle School Teacher Dr. Ron Kealy, Assistant Professor, College of Education, University of Florida, Gainesville
2:30-2:40	STAND-UP BREAK

2:40-3:30	JOINT SESSION OF DIVISION OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION AND TEAC TASK FORCE ON THE MIDDLE SCHOOL
Presiding:	Jack Gant, Associate for Teacher Education, Division of Teacher Education, Certification and Accreditation
	Introduction of TEAC Task Force and Discussion of TEAC Guidelines for the Middle School
	Dr. Bert Sharp, Chairman, TEAC Task Force on Middle School and Dean, College of Education, University of Florida, Gainesville

Greetings from Florida's Commissioner of Education

Verbatim Transcript of Remarks by Floyd T. Christian

I wanted to come over here this morning not only because I don't often have the opportunity to get our staff members together, but also because this seems to be one of the greatest times to be alive in American Education. There is so much going on. It is much like our Legislature this year where so many important issues are being decided. It seems that in education we are faced with so many, many decisions on how we are going to develop programs: the middle school concept is one, differentiated staffing is another, and the extended school year is still another.

Without listing all of these programs, just let me say that many people in the field regard the members of the State Department of Education as the experts. They think that you have the answers! For you to have the answers, you will want to listen and talk to people like Dr. Bill Alexander and this group of distinguished speakers. In order to be the kind of person you want to be in representing this Department in the field, you need this interchange so that you will continue to be knowledgeable and well-informed in discussing these issues when you go into the counties. You must know what we are talking about when we say "middle school," "extended day," "extended year," "differentiated staffing," and many other concepts into which we are moving. I am always pleased when Dr. Crenshaw tells me that the staff is involved in a study of these issues. And, I hope that you will, after today's meeting, continue to improve your knowledge on these subjects.

This year we dedicated five middle schools. There was one in a small county where they have fewer than 1,000 students, and others were in some of our largest counties. We saw teachers who were really enthusiastic and who wanted all the help they could get in moving into the middle school. In others there were some who thought "Well we've been told to do this so we'll do the best we can." Now there is real variance between these two positions. In one they are really enthusiastic and in the other they feel they have to do it to keep their positions. The staff which was enthusiastic seemed to be knowledgeable about what they were trying to do — their enthusiasm came in attempting to meet their goals and objectives. This was a challenge for them and we could feel it as we visited in the classrooms. But, as in the other school, we could also feel it when the teachers were just performing a task the school board had assigned. I had the feeling that perhaps these teachers had not had the opportunity to be fundamentally grounded in the basic concept of the middle school and that they were starting without any knowledge of what they were trying to do.

So here is your big opportunity. Persons at the local school level look up to the members of the State Department of Education as officials with authority and leadership qualities — as the ones who have the answers. You need to know, for the benefit of this Department and our State, as much as you can about this concept. If we are going to try it, you need to inspire our people in the field to implement it in the best way possible so that we can have a better educational program from it.

Background of the Middle School Movement

Verbatim Transcript of Address by William Alexander

In our Florida counties as new educational ideas are spoken about and as there is training for the development of these ideas and their implementation , there are always the questions: "But what will the State Department say? Will they help us? How will they handle certification? How will they handle accreditation?" So I think it salutary that you take this day to acquaint yourselves more fully with the concept and program of the middle school.

I well remember when I first came to the State of Florida, to Dade County and the University of Miami in 1950, to participate in a meeting of the state supervisory staff. Nearly all of us could have gotten around this speaker's table at one time because the staff was so small. It has grown and your schools have grown and the problems of education have grown. The one encouraging thing is that I truly believe we have more potential answers to some of these problems in 1969 than we had in 1950. We aren't able to use all we know. We have not been able to implement all these ideas, but we are now on the course of attempting to put to work what we do know. We are able to formulate our problems more clearly and turn to better research sources to get answers. I wish I could tell you that research has firmly established the idea that the middle school is a better organization than any other organization. I can not do it. I know of no research of any comprehensive nature that tells us that <u>any</u> one organization is better than any other at any level -- middle school, junior high school, elementary school or high school.

During this past year I have reviewed, with the assistance of two fine graduate students, several hundred pieces of research dealing with school organization, specifically the organization for instruction. In all sincerity we cannot find much to substantiate any of our present instructional practices. This does not leave me wholly discouraged. Indeed, it may encourage one to know that there is at least support for experimentation as long as we have no certainty that what we are doing now is valid. Let's build into our experimentation research designs so that we will be able to answer, in the foreseeable future, the question of whether or not one organization is really superior, at least for particular purposes, to some other organization.

WHAT IS THE MIDDLE SCHOOL?

Now you asked me to talk about the background of the middle school. Knowing that there are many different understandings of what a middle school is, I shall try to define it. I would say very simply that the middle school is an institution to serve the middle level of childhood. It is the school, the period of schooling, which parallels in human growth and development the period that some call transescence. The word is "transescence" and of course it is a word which was coined to describe the youngster who is neither a little child nor a full-grown adolescent. It is the youngster we have in the past called an older

child, a pre-adolescent. It is the youngster typically between the ages of 10 and 14 who is in the process of becoming, but has not really become an adolescent.

This middle school then is a school which, however it may be organized, should be focused on the in-between population --the in-between ages. Some would call them the "tween-agers"; some even talk about the "middle-aged child." Whatever term we use, we are talking about the period of human growth and development which is different from early childhood and different from adolescence. The behavioral scientists have given us a good deal of data as to how this period differs from the other two periods.

Looking at it another way, the middle school is frequently defined as the school which encompasses what we have under the graded school system defined as grades 5 through 8, or even 6 through 8. Or, that it encompasses the age range of 10 through 12. I would like to make very clear that it is really not a substitute alone for the junior high school as we have known it, nor is it a substitute for the upper grades of the elementary school.

THE CHANGING SCHOOL LADDER

The middle school as it is being organized is more frequently a reorganization of the school ladder, if you think of the school ladder as encompassing kindergarten through grade 12. Historically in this country we have had several organizations of that school ladder. A few of us here, maybe a good many, grew up under the 8-4 school ladder. A good many of us went through and taught there. That was the prevailing, the predominant, pattern of school organization in the United States until the 1920-1930's. Of course, it was not too old because until about 100 years ago we did not even have a ladder system. People went into high school without any prerequisite elementary education. The high schools might extend all the way down to ages seven and eight. But with the advent of the school ladder, the 8-4 plan was popularized. In the 1920's four out of every five youngsters who went through the high schools of this country went through an eight-grade elementary school and a four-year high school.

Then during the first twenty years of this century, there was a flurry of activity toward reorganization. The literature resembled that which we are reading today. The argument was that there ought to be a transitional program from the elementary school to the high school; that there ought to be a program of education which really was beamed toward the later years of childhood and early years of adolescence. So the junior high school was born in 1910. Because of the great increase in population after World War I very frequently the answer to school building problems was to erect the new junior high school. This was done by taking out the two upper grades of the elementary school and pulling down the ninth grade from the high school. The real surge of initial movement toward the junior high school was much more the practical problem of taking care of school population and building enrollments than it was to meet the needs of the pre-adolescent child, as they had been referred to in the literature.

During the following forty years from 1920 to 1960 the junior high school became a very popular institution. By 1960 the situation had quite reversed and four out of every five youngsters in the United States went through 6-3-3 kind of school ladder and it became the popular type of school organization. However, 20 per cent of the population went through some other kind of organization -- very frequently this was the old 8-4, and also frequently the 5-3-4 kind of ladder. In many of the communities, particularly the suburban communities when the eight-grade elementary school got too large, they lopped off the top 3 or 4 grades and set it aside as an intermediate school or junior high school. They usually left the ninth grade in the high school.

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL MOVEMENT

During the 1960's there has been a dissatisfaction with the 6-3-3 pattern and a movement toward still another organization of the school ladder. This is the wave in which the middle school erupted. Last year Dr. Kealy and I completed a survey of these reorganized middle schools in the United States. We made, with the help of the state departments of education and other sources, as exhaustive a list as possible of all the middle schools -- that is, schools that were organized grade-wise as middle schools in the United States. We said that a middle school is any school which represents a reorganization of prior elementary-secondary grades so that grades six through eight, or five through eight, or a similar pattern, came in the middle. We found, to my surprise because I thought I had followed the movement very carefully, there were actually 1,101 of these schools in the United States. Most of them called themselves middle schools, though many called themselves junior high schools or intermediate schools or even elementary schools.

I want to emphasize the fact that this number is now of sheer historic interest because my impression is that the number of schools as of the fall of 1969 will be far greater. Look at your own state which at the time of this survey showed only ten schools. I do not know the exact number but I would guess that there will be 25 or 30 by fall and an ever growing number of schools and counties in which there is an effort being made to investigate or even to establish a new middle school. Judging from the correspondence that I receive as a result of doing the survey and of people trying to keep me up-to-date and trying to learn what I know about the middle school as I consult and work with school districts across the country, the movement is really of almost band-wagon proportion. Now I want to hasten to say that I regard this with a bit of alarm as interested as I am in providing a better school program for the tween-agers -- for the transescent child. To do this on the over-night basis that Floyd Christian referred to, without proper planning of program, without re-definition of the scope, function, and program of the school may not make one bit of difference.

I think I can document this from the survey of these 1,101 schools, but first you might like just a few facts. First, ninety per cent had been established during the 1960's; only ten per cent really ever existed prior to 1960. Furthermore, almost fifty per cent of them had been developed during the years of 1966 and 1967. This is to further document the fact that this is a very rapidly growing movement. Approximately sixty per cent included grades 6-8, approximately thirty per cent included grades 5-8, and

the remaining ten per cent were of various organizational patterns -- 4-7, 6-9, and others. The survey would indicate that the 6-8 is twice as popular as the 5-8.

The clear fact is that the majority of these schools really had not been planned so as to have a program that was distinctly different from the program of the predecessor institutions, namely, the elementary school and the junior high school. In fact, when you looked at their organization and saw departmentalization pushed down into the 6th grade and the 5th grade the continued interest in extra-curricular activities of a sophisticated nature common to the high school including inter-scholastic athletics, the publicity in some cases of elective subjects and the continuation of six-period uniform scheduling, you had to realize that in all too many cases the so-called middle school was really a junior-junior high school. I think this is what we do not want in Florida. If we are completely satisfied with the junior high school, I see no reason to move to something we call differently and merely move the ninth grade up and the sixth grade in. But, if we are really dissatisfied with our education program for the transescent child, I think we need to get busy in defining the nature of that program and into developing a cadre of teachers who are competent to deal with this program and with this age child.

WHY THE MIDDLE SCHOOL?

Why the middle school then? Let me try to pick up several points here. We asked the principals of our ten per cent of these 1,101 schools why they went into the middle school. We got many reasons. We can group these reasons into two groups which I will call <u>in theory</u> and <u>in fact</u>.

<u>In theory</u>, the overwhelming answer was to provide a better program for the in-between-age youngster. Related to that, very frequently, was the idea of having a better articulated program. This, of course, beamed at the point that in our typical school organization pattern right here in Florida and across the country, we have two distinctly different systems of education -- an elementary system and a secondary system. The junior high school becomes the bottom part of the secondary system, but is not distinctly different in its pattern of organization, teacher preparation, program, schedule, extra-curricular activities program, etc.

We know that in the typical community and typical school system, this break from the elementary school to the secondary school, the junior high school, is a very rough break. As we move the middle grades from the elementary school with its emphasis on the self-contained classroom and to the departmentalized program of the high school, will the new school really be a transitional school? Of course, that's what the fathers of the junior high hoped for too. Having failed to get it there, maybe the new reorganization which really focuses on the middle and is planned by those in the middle as well as those below and those above, will accomplish this kind of organization. I think this is really happening in a number of committees across the country where the middle school planning committee is representative of elementary and high school as well as those who are primarily interested in working in the middle school.

This is the hope, I think, of the third reason I would mention, namely, the more rapid introduction of change in a school system by focusing on the middle and on a new organization and program that inevitably touches not only the middle but also the grades touching on both sides. I think the rationale here has some justification. If we are really attempting to introduce change as we must, and in many schools fairly rapidly, it may be easier to introduce it and to have widespread effects, if we focus on the middle rather than starting at the top or at the bottom, if you can't work throughout the school system.

Now as to the fact of establishing the middle school, I think each of these three I've mentioned "in theory" applies certainly in many of these middle schools even though they got started because of an over-crowding or building problem. The principal and staff are frequently attempting to plan the structure so carefully that they will in effect ultimately have a program that is better planned for this age group. I think there are a good many of these schools in which the rationale of better articulation is a very clear reason and is reflected in the kind of planning that is done and in the involvement of elementary and secondary people.

It is quite clear that in many of our forward-looking communities across the country, the middle school is regarded by boards of education, school administrators, and others as a means of introducing rapid change. There are undoubtedly a good many school districts where the immediate rationale for the middle school has been desegregation. It has been to get kids out of their neighborhood a little earlier. This was the impetus in New York City, Boston, Baltimore, New Haven, Philadelphia, and other eastern cities.

I think we have to recognize that people in education are very conscious of what their neighbors are doing. If they hear glowing reports about the new middle school in Xville, the people in Yville may want one too! I would not discount this completely. If those glowing reports are really substantiated in Xville, maybe it is worthwhile for Yville to look into building one, as long as the people in Yville do not go over to Xville and just copy without any real planning on their part as to what they need in their particular community. I would very much hope that as people in the State Department advise groups across the state who are setting up new middle school programs they would go a little slow on visiting other schools. I get calls almost daily from people in this state and out of this state asking where to go to visit a middle school. I hesitate to answer the question without knowing more about the purpose of the visit. This is in no way to say "It is not important to go visit." I think after the local group has defined its population, after it has begun to talk about what they want in the school that is different from what they have now, and when they begin to get some conception of the program, they may certainly profit by visiting schools elsewhere.

UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

One of the first questions that usually comes as you get into middle school planning is: "How does the middle school differ from the schools we now have?" It is a difficult question to answer because it really depends on the characteristics of the middle school -- and middle schools vary a great deal. So do the other schools we now have, so that you almost

must make it school-to-school for any comparison to be valid. I think we can look at some of the theories of the middle school, such as are presented in our book, The Emergent Middle School, and in some of the other literature and find what would be characteristic of the middle school and compare that with what we know to be characteristic of the majority of the elementary schools and junior high schools. I would like to talk to that question in terms of what we hope is in the middle school as compared to what is in the typical elementary school or the typical junior high school. I think I can define a few differences.

Number one, as compared with the elementary school one would usually find a self-contained classroom organization in the elementary school and not the middle school. The self-contained classroom of the elementary school is a fine institution and it has much to commend it, but the older youngster whose intellectual apparatus can grasp concepts, requires a teacher who has some depth in a field. To teach that child in self-containment may deny the youngster the opportunity to really be inspired, to be led, to be guided by his teacher into some depth in the subject fields. This is no criticism of the elementary school as we have known it. This is a new world -- knowledge is so much greater than ever before. Look at the whole new field of aerospace sciences and all the other fields that are in the process of being created. How can we expect any person with maybe nine or twelve college hours in science to really do the job of explaining some of the scientific background of these movements to youngsters in the fifth and sixth grades?

Now I would say in the middle school there might be occasions when we would have one teacher operating very much like the self-contained classroom teacher. It might be that for the first few weeks, if not months, as the fifth graders move into the building they should continue the kind of organization they have had. You could have a type of team planning and operation where when the point came that you needed the person with the special background you would be able to call on that person. You could have a type of flexibility that is lacking in both the elementary and junior high schools today.

The second difference I would like to mention is that there would be, on the positive side, some specialization of teaching. There would be in this middle school, in each of the major subject areas, a person who had some preparation, some background from college study. More than that, I would hope that each teacher would have an interest in keeping up-dated in his field because no amount of college work in most of our subject fields is any longer a guarantee that the person is up-dated, stimulating, exciting, and interesting in the teaching field. I think it takes a commitment to continued study and intellectual curiosity as well as some skills in the field for the person to keep abreast.

In the elementary school, as compared with the middle school, there is a lack of any kind of elective system or exploratory program. We would expect to find in the middle school the opportunity for youngsters to choose something that they would study, hopefully maybe one or two of their programs of study each year. The amazing thing is that even in our junior high schools today, we are so bound by the Carnegie Unit requirements and the program of the ninth grade and many other factors, that there is really very little election in some of our junior high schools. It is pretty well a prescribed program that needs to be broken down. Along with that, certainly there is need for more flexibility than

the teacher saying that if a student gets far enough in the workbook, he can go to the library and read. What he needs is the opportunity to bring to the teacher a question or topic or a problem when he has special interest and go through the kind of program that we call independent study where this child has an opportunity to really explore on his own. However incomplete his work may be, he needs an opportunity to do something for which he himself had the motive, for which he himself is responsible for the finished product. So much for comparing the elementary school and the middle school.

How does the junior high school differ from the middle school? Let me say, in all honesty, that if the junior high school had achieved the purposes and functions as set forth in the 1920's, I think there would be no need to look for this reorganization except for the fact that in human growth and development children are maturing earlier these days with ninth graders, by and large, fully adolescent. I do not think there would be much reason to disturb the organization and program of the junior high school if it conformed to its original purposes. But, the junior high school has <u>not</u> served as a transitional program in most cases because it took over the Carnegie Unit requirements, the schedule, the departmentalization, the extra-curricular activity program of the senior high school. The pattern of departmentalization creates personality conflicts between different styles of teaching and learning. In the middle school I hope we will not find departmentalization any more than we find self-containment.

We have to get some new organizations of teaching and as I see it the most promising thing of all and the one that more middle schools are turning to as they are being planned is a team-teaching type of operation. There is more than one pattern for this. I think particularly of the pattern where you may have an organization that involves having each teacher with his own home base group of 25 children or so, working first of all as the counselor-teacher combination for that group, really replacing the self-contained teacher of the elementary school. But that is maybe one hour a day or maybe it is not even an hour every day. In addition, this person is serving as a specialist in one of the five major areas of language arts, social studies, math, or science. Four of these people with respective specialities in these four areas comprise, really, a teaching team for perhaps 100 children. So the basic class becomes 100 rather than 25. Then responsible professional teachers can plan the kind of schedule arrangement which is most effective for these children and which gives their competencies the best chance to work. In some cases this can turn out to be something that looks like departmentalization. Here is where the principal, the curriculum coordinator, and whoever else is responsible has to keep working with teachers to make certain it does not get too easy to simply follow the clock again, and once again get into the pattern where learning stops when the bells ring and where there is no real coordination and planning of instruction.

Obviously, the middle school would not need the uniform schedule of the junior high school. One of the encouraging things about our survey was that about one-third of these middle schools had some kind of scheduling arrangement other than the uniform day of six or seven periods. Obviously, this middle school will have something different from the administrative homeroom of the junior high school -- something more than ten minutes to count noses, to distribute tickets or collect lunch money. The middle school should have a home-base arrangement where the teacher is really closely acquainted with the children and is serving at least as their program planner,

their helper, in selecting a special learning opportunity in a school, and representing these children in the team planning where teachers attempt to diagnose some of the difficulties of individual learners.

I would see in this middle school much more concern for the continued teaching of learning skills than we had in the junior high school. There would be a continuation on a very individualized basis of instruction in reading and instruction and in all the other learning skills, including interviewing, asking questions, putting materials together, evaluating information, generalizing, problem solving, and the like. I would certainly hope, too, that there would not be the typical interscholastic athletic program and the sophisticated social activities of the junior high school in the middle school.

IN CONCLUSION

The middle school poses a real opportunity. It offers the opportunity to provide a program that we have never been able to successfully and widely produce for children of transescence who, by and large, are the most neglected, educationally speaking, group in our society. These are the critical years. Of course, one can make a case for any period of years being the critical ones, but I truly do believe that it is in these years that values are established which determine the kind of behavior one sees in adolescence, youth, and even adulthood. It is in these years that decisions are really made whether to continue or drop out of school; it is in these years that children develop an interest of an academic nature or turn aside from anything academic or intellectual; it is in these years that children come to grips with themselves as persons and throw off their dependence on adults; and that they become, to some extent, self-sufficient. So it seems to me anything we can do to provide a better program of education for children of this age group, whether it be a reorganization, refurbishing, and improvement of existing schools or through the establishment of new middle schools is very much worth our consideration.

Characteristics and Desired Behaviors of the Middle School Child

Mary F. Compton

We know much more about youngsters today than we have ever known before -- how they develop physically, psychologically, and intellectually. We even know more about the age group which has been most ignored by psychologists and educators -- the group known by various labels -- "pre- and early adolescents," "in-between-agers," or "tween-agers" -- the ten-to-fourteen-year-olds. These youngsters are the prime reason for the establishment of a new rung of the school ladder, the middle school -- a place just for them. When the junior high school was established almost sixty years ago, about all we knew about youngsters this age was their average height and weight. Today we are not as concerned with these averages because no child is average! Have you ever met a parent who is willing to admit that his child is "only average?" I haven't! Focusing on the so-called average obscures the true picture -- the various kinds of growth at varying rates and the accompanying effect on 'tween-agers.

It seems apropos to enumerate the characteristics of this in-between group which differentiate them from younger children and from the full-fledged adolescent and which call for a school organization specifically designed for them. I recognize that any individual is more than the sum of his characteristics. He is truly a product of the transaction of these characteristics with the environment. For purposes of discussion, however, I will categorize these characteristics into three distinct groups -- physical, intellectual, and "psycho-social" (personality development).

Physical Development

Each of us has a sort of blueprint for growth. The blueprint is the same for all boys and girls, but the rate at which each body develops varies immensely. Most of us develop at approximately the same rate, but other perfectly normal persons mature earlier or later than the rest of us. A conspicuous characteristic of body development is the marked change of growth rate that occurs before pubescence and again after pubescence. For some youngsters there is a rapid acceleration for a year, maintenance of a rapid rate for another year, and a gradual decrease for an additional year. For these youngsters pubescence may occur at around the age of fourteen. For another child of the same sex, the pattern may be the same but the period of time involved may be much shorter; he may reach puberty by the time he is twelve. Some children reach this period of transition at ten years of age; others, at fourteen; still others, somewhere between. The grades during which virtually all children are at some stage of transition are grades five through eight or the years from ten to fourteen.

The pituitary gland, which is the villian responsible for giants and dwarfs, increases production of two hormones during the transition period. One hormone shrinks clothing -- or so it may seem to mothers. Actually, it stimulates the over-all growth of bones and tissue. Shirtsleeves and trousers are suddenly too short (we don't have to worry very much about skirt length these days), blouses and skirts do not seem to meet or to fasten properly,

and ears and noses appear out-sized for faces (giving the appearance of unsuccessful transplants from Hoss Cartwright to the cherubic face of a child). A second hormone influences sexual development, and the secondary sexual characteristics begin to appear -- the broadening of boys' shoulders, changes of voice, growth of the beard, and the change of a girl's figure from a childlike 21"-21"-21" to a more womanly and curvacious form. Many 'tween-agers are, physiologically, men and women.

A fluctuation in basal metabolism during the years of transition may cause youngsters to be extremely restless at some times and listless at others. This may be disconcerting to parents, teachers, librarians, scout leaders, recreation directors, and other adults with whom the 'tween-ager comes in contact.

These physical changes are disconcerting to no one more than to the 'tween-ager himself. His rapidly growing and changing body is difficult to manage. He is awkward, gawky, and clumsy. He trips over his own feet, invisible wires, and pieces of lint on the carpet. He has problems of personal adjustment -- especially in our society with its emphasis on personal appearance. 'Tween-agers are constantly bombarded with the so-called physical ideal by television, movies, illustrations in novels and periodicals, and even in beer and cigarette advertising. Through these media our society seems to be saying to them, "Do your dead-level best to look like Rock Hudson or Raquel Welch!" "Think thin!" "Smell good!" "Have the freshest mouth in town!" "Hide your blemishes!" -- and even "Blondes have more fun!" (more fun than what or whom I haven't yet been able to determine).

We don't tell them that they are going through a period of rapid growth experienced by all of us (including the Rocks and the Raquels) which will finally taper off during their high school years. We don't tell them that what is really important is what is under the oh-so-thin epidermic layer in which each of us is encased.

Evidence indicates that these physical changes begin to take place generally two years earlier today than when the junior high school was established. The twelve-year-old of 1910 is comparable physically to the ten-year-old of 1970.

These physical changes are undoubtedly the most obvious of the alterations the 'tween-ager experiences. They are not necessarily the most important, but they do have a profound influence on the other facets of development.

Intellectual Development

When each of us gasped for our first breath outside of the womb, we had a potential for intellectual functioning. Intellectual development and the portion of our potential for intellectual activity which becomes developed varies greatly from one individual to another. Psychologists tell us that few of us develop more than a small portion of this potential -- probably no more than ten per cent. During the years from ten to fourteen, the child begins to lose some of his dependence on what is viewed as reality and to focus on what is potential reality. He can tell us, for example, that the symbols "1, 2, 3, and 4" will probably be followed by "5, 6, 7, and 8."

At first he still focuses, however, on the immediate present -- the "here and now" -- the concrete. He will begin to develop the ability to deal with abstract concepts -- both the real and the possible. He will consider the problem at hand by attempting to envision all possible relations. The next step is seeking, through experimentation and analysis, to test hypotheses -- discarding those not verified by his results. He then forms further hypotheses to be tested.

Youngsters at this level are beginning to be able to reverse their thinking -- not only to proceed from start to finish in a mental sequence but to be able to return to the starting point or any point in the sequence. Not only can this youngster multiply 5 x 5 and get 25, but he can discover that the square root of 25 is 5. In social studies, to use another example, he cannot only see sequential events leading to a specific consequence, but he can see how a change in one of the events might have prevented the consequence.

During this transition period, youngsters can reason that two objects may possess similar properties regardless of their appearance -- "conservation" is the label given this ability by cognitive psychologists. In its early phases, it is mental conservation of mass -- a ball of clay may be shaped into a cube and still contain the same amount of clay. Conservation of weight comes later.

Most ten- and eleven-year-olds approach the solution of problems in a much different manner than do younger children in the elementary grades. They operate on a plane similar to that of students in the present junior high school years. Yet, they are subjected to an instructional program which does not differ, in the main, from that provided for children in the early elementary grades.

Personality Development

It would be folly to consider the development of personality removed from a social context. It is in this context that a youngster develops an understanding of who he is, what he is, what he is capable or incapable of doing, and his relative value in this world now and in the future -- his self-concept. This concept is based on an internal frame of reference from within the boundaries of the individual's own skin. It is quite different from the concept other people have of him. To his mother he may be her darling child who is "all boy" (whatever that may mean); to his brother, a nosey pest; to his teachers, a potential mathematician but a poor literary prospect; to his scoutmaster, the boy most likely to make Eagle Scout; and to his playmates, the best sandlot slugger in the world. He may view himself as a butterfingered, clumsy boy who would like to be able to tinker with an old car as does his older brother; as a fairly good hitter in baseball who would rather be a pitcher; as a less-than-acceptable speaker who would rather risk the wrath of his teacher than suffer the embarrassment of the newly-acquired and horrible squeak that suddenly and unexpectantly sounds when he asks or answers a question in class. He may not like the way he looks or sounds or the way he tries to do things right but never seems to be able to please anyone.

Changes in the self concept occur slowly and gradually. During early childhood, the home and the neighborhood (and what he sees on television) are most of his world. When he enters school, this world broadens. During the 'tween years, the youngster is neither a child nor an adolescent -- he is in "limbo" or "no man's land." Parents and other adults are no longer as important as they once were. Teachers, who were formerly viewed as supreme authorities, begin to have some faults to accompany their many virtues. Youngsters can differentiate the qualities of teachers they admire and dislike. They begin to sever the accepting and dependent relationship with the teacher. They are influenced by the behavior of teachers in terms of the effect of such behavior on them. Each act of teacher behavior directed toward the child affects his understanding of himself.

As the child is developing his self concept, he is also learning what it means to be male or female. This is the basic process through which the youngster learns to think, feel, and act like a member of one sex in contrast to the other sex. In our society children are expected to display certain types of behavior which are acceptable only for their particular sex. Boys are expected to be loud, rough, untidy, aggressive, adventuresome; girls, on the other hand, are expected to be quiet, docile, neat and ladylike. We are more willing to accept "male" behavior in girls than female behavior in boys. To be a tomboy is acceptable and something the little gal "will grow out of." To be a sissy, however, is to carry a label which will be quite difficult for the little fellow to live down. With the onset of the transition period boys begin to reject maternal ties and to seek rugged, active, aggressive maleness and models they can exemplify. Boys feel it is important to disassociate themselves from any sign of female interest or control. The identification of the sex role does not seem so crucial for the girl, who has been exposed to female interest and control both at school and at home and does not have to disassociate herself to define her role. She has helped mama in the kitchen, has played "house," and probably has had a female teacher. For many 'tweens this is a major problem, the proportions of which they have never confronted to this degree at any time during their earlier lives.

With the search for the sex role and the rejection of adult influence, the peer group begins to be viewed in a different light. Both boys and girls are keenly aware of sex differences. Males express a much more negative attitude toward females than girls do toward them. Close friends are of the same sex. The peer group offers a sort of security in that the youngster can do what everyone else is doing. The influence the peer group has on the behavior of the 'tween-ager may disturb his teacher. Not only is the child less willing to accept his teacher as the sort of minor deity he has formerly been, but many children will be willing to suffer punishment from the teacher in order to retain their places in the peer group. To be different is to be doomed!

During the years of transition, the child is changing from emotional behavior which can be described as contented and amiable to that displayed by an often aggressive, belligerent, and argumentative individual. At times the 'tween may seem to be a youthful Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. At one meeting he may seem hurt, sad, jealous, or competitive; at the next, worried, cheerful, affectionate, or timid. His anger is more intense and deeper than that of the younger child, and he may strike out with more fervor. It takes him longer,

also, to recuperate from emotional outbursts. Tears are usually standing in the wings waiting for the right cue. One parent has referred to the emotional behavior of the 'tween-ager as the "attic/cellar syndrome."

Difficulty in learning to cope with his changing body, a new mode of intellectual functioning, and the desire to be a person in his own right -- independent of familial (and especially maternal) dominance -- and to be a person accepted by the peer group, all of this presents a tremendous problem of adjustment for youngsters during this transitional period. Behavior of an emotional nature can be traced to one or several of these changes. During no other period of human growth and development are youngsters required to adjust themselves to so many changes simultaneously.

One need not be an expert in human growth and development to know that the 'tween-ager is quite different from the younger child or the full-fledged adolescent. Indeed, one 'tween is different from all other 'tweens although he may share some stages of development with all or most other youngsters of this age group. Actually, one of the major characteristics of the in-between-age group is that they are unique as a developmental group and their uniqueness from all others during this transition period makes them alike by their differences. At no other period of development are youngsters so different from one another. These differences should be reflected in a school program designed specifically for this age group. We have <u>never</u> focused our efforts on the provision of such a program. The in-between-age group has been relegated to the role of stepchild to the elementary program designed for younger children and the junior high program, which has been aped the senior high school. In Winfred Dacus' study of the social, emotional, and physical maturity, and opposite sex choices of children in grades five through ten the <u>least</u> amounts of difference were found between youngsters in grades <u>six</u> and <u>seven</u> and those in grades <u>nine</u> and <u>ten</u> -- the very years at which we assign youngsters to different kinds of organizational patterns -- patterns based on what we knew about youngsters six decades ago.

These youngsters need a type of school program designed specifically for them, a program in which their differences and their needs are taken into consideration by adults who understand, and like them! No child at any age should be taught by a teacher who doesn't like, know, and understand him. The transitional years are so challenging (though difficult) to teach that teachers who are assigned to teach them against their wishes would be better off emptying bedpans in a hospital!

What implications can be drawn for the curriculum from the characteristics of this group? Let me preface some very general recommendations with the plea that the curriculum should vary from one middle school to the next. Communities differ because they are composed of different individuals. A middle school curriculum designed for Tallahassee might be inappropriate for Pahokee or Melbourne or Ocala or Naples. Curricula should be devised for the youngsters to be served.

Several general components I would hope middle schools would have in common:

1. Articulation (in reality and not just on paper) with the elementary school to assure ease of transition from the earlier school to the middle school. This may necessitate a quasi self-contained classroom

organization during at least a portion of the school day for the first year in the middle school.

2. Since these youngsters can benefit from instruction by specialists, they recognize competence and incompetence in teachers, they enjoy variety, and are capable of understanding the relationship between various subjects. Team teaching by subject area specialists in one subject field or in several closely-related fields would seem indicated.

3. Differences in developmental rate, academic ability, and interest would call for time when youngsters could work alone. Skills laboratories staffed by technologists with subject matter competencies to provide remedial, developmental, as well as advanced instruction in such skills as reading, listening, writing, mathematics, science, foreign languages, art, music, and physical education. In addition, independent study opportunities should be available for <u>all</u> students, commensurate with the topic selected and their needs, interests, and abilities.

4. There should be times when youngsters work in small groups of ten to fifteen. Small group discussions should supplement large-group instruction so that youngsters may explore ideas, ask questions, and pursue in greater depth hypotheses triggered in the large group sessions. An interested and well-prepared teacher should be available for clarification but should not dominate the group interaction. A second type of small group should take the place of the homeroom group -- but not assume its role. This group should be assigned to a teacher with special preparation in guidance and counseling who can provide the opportunity for youngsters to discuss problems of special importance to them (and selected by them) and to counsel with youngsters who have individual problems which may not be severe enough to be referred to a full-time professional guidance worker. During group discussions, this teacher should serve only as a director of verbal traffic and as a clarifier (when the group turns to him for this function).

5. There should be an activity program in which each youngster will be able to participate -- a program based on personal development of students rather than on the enhancement of the school's prestige or the entertainment of the public. I'm referring to interest clubs as "rock hounds," intramural sports, and recreational activities such as bowling, bridge, chess, camping, dance, ceramics -- and not to interschool athletics, marching bands, cheer leaders, and clubs which are junior versions of high school clubs.

6. Each youngster because of his unique interests, needs, and abilities should be scheduled individually into a program tailored specially for him -- skills laboratories, small group and large group sessions for as many modules of time per week as needed. Without the presence of grade nine, the spectre of the Carnegie unit is also absent. The program is free to vary greatly for youngsters the same chronological age. <u>True</u> non-grading or continuous progress types of vertical organization are possible without the dominance of six or seven neatly-tied packages of 50-minute duration five days a week as imposed by the Carnegie unit.

7. Evaluation based on individual progress rather than a punitive grading system which has been waved like a club over the heads of many youngsters to "keep them in line." This evaluation should be a guide for youngsters and teacher in planning co-operatively future experiences as well as informing parents of the progress of their children.

School districts which contemplate the establishment of middle schools, whether for the purpose of de facto segregation or integration, to serve as a catalyst for change throughout the entire spectrum of public education, to relieve over-crowded conditions in schools, to justify the building of a new school plant, or for whatever reason the consideration is to be made, should stop and consider their proposed actions in light of the major justification for the inclusion of such a school organization -- the middle school youngster and his needs. If these youngsters and their needs are ignored in the determination of the curriculum, the building, the staff and its policies, a new middle school may stand as much chance as a snowball in Honolulu of being any more effective than the institutions which have preceded it.

The Middle School Teacher

Ron Kealy

Although there is no body of inducive evidence with regard to the competencies teachers need or the type of preparation required to develop these competencies on planning for middle school teacher education, we may infer several competencies on the basis of the nature of the transescent and the middle school program.

Teacher competencies can be classified as personal qualities and professional abilities. Personal qualities are those traits, attitudes, and values that characterize an individual -- in other words, his personality. Teacher education institutions, for the most part, have not made a concerted effort to develop these competencies, focusing mainly on professional abilities -- those skills and understandings considered necessary for effective teaching. Since personal qualities are learned through experience, they are teachable, and since they seem to be at least as important as professional abilities for effective teaching, teacher education programs should be highly concerned with the development of these competencies.

Many of the personal qualities desirable for the middle school teacher are those admired in any teacher, or in any human being for that matter. Those discussed in this speech seem to have special significance for the middle school teacher. Similarly, several of the professional abilities desirable for the middle school teacher are desirable for teachers at any level. These are classified as general professional abilities while those that have special significance for the middle school teacher are classified as specialized professional abilities.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

Positive View of Self

If the middle school teacher is to understand, accept, and guide the transescent, he needs an understanding and acceptance of his own strengths and weaknesses. The teacher who has a positive view of self will not be limited by the need for the security of a teacher-dominated, impersonal, regimented classroom situation, and the classroom can then become the "laboratory for self-identification" that best represents middle school philosophy. This teacher will have the confidence and self-understanding to harmonize his efforts with children's interests and purposes instead of "soloing" to a captive audience in a starved classroom environment. Close association with a positive-thinking teacher encourages the transescent to explore without fear of failure and thereby actively pursue his self-identification.

One way of acquiring teachers who have a positive view of self is to screen teacher aspirants. As Combs points out, "It is literally true that some people do not need special training to make them good teachers." He continues, "Unhappily, the number of such persons is quite small and most people still need help." According to Combs, Kelley, Maslow, and Rogers a positive view of self can be learned. How can teacher training institutions, then, go about developing this competency? The following suggestions made by Combs provide some direction in this matter:

> Since the self-concept of the teacher is learned in the same fashion as any other perception...teacher educators must concern themselves with:
>
> 1. Creating an atmosphere in the college and within its classrooms and activities which encourages and facilitates the student's discovery of himself as a more adequate person and teacher;
>
> 2. Providing experiences designed to help students see themselves as adequate, effective people;
>
> 3. Assisting actively the student's personal search for meaning and the discovery of himself as a person and as a teacher.

It is apparent that a professional education curriculum which fosters a positive view of self will have to be highly personalized. The individualization of instruction sought for the middle school must also be a goal of the professional education curriculum for prospective middle school teachers. The program must be integrated around the individual, encouraging and helping him to understand himself, to build upon his strengths, and to work at removing his personal weaknesses.

Flexibility and Creativeness

Flexibility and creativeness are by-products of a positive and accurate view of self. The teacher who has a positive self-concept will be secure enough to be flexible and to try new approaches to instruction. These personal qualities are essential in providing for the individualized needs and ambivalent behavior of the transescent. In discussing desirable characteristics for prospective middle school teachers, Alexander and co-authors point out:

> Many teachers are uncomfortable in an atmosphere of continual search for new and better ways to organize, direct, and evaluate instructional procedures; but the new middle school is committed to an innovative approach. Teachers in the middle school will be expected to try out many new plans, materials, approaches, and techniques. The process of change can be very stimulating, but it is also very demanding. The prospective middle school teacher should face candidly the question of whether he prefers the stimulation of challenge to the security of a comfortable routine.

The teacher who prefers to teach by a "paint by the numbers" approach in a highly controlled environment may become frustrated in the middle school and may not be able to promote effectively the achievement of middle school objectives. The middle school needs teachers who are flexible enough to try many different approaches, who can take advantage of emerging opportunities, and who are creative enough to provide learning experiences appropriate for the individualized needs and interests of transescent pupils.

Prospective middle school teachers cannot easily develop the qualities of flexibility and creativeness in a professional education curriculum characterized by blanket requirements, irrelevant courses taught by decidedly

non-innovative methods, and few experiences requiring creative responses. The professional education curriculum for middle school teachers should be a model of individualized instruction, utilizing those teaching methods that show most promise for better individualizing instruction, and providing many opportunities for the prospective teacher to test and develop his flexibility and creativeness, especially in working with students.

Respect for the Dignity and Worth of the Individual

A personal value that holds special significance for the middle school teacher is a belief in the democratic process, the basic tenet of which is the dignity and worth of the individual. It recognizes the need for the fullest development of each individual's capacity. The search for self-identity is an individualized process, unique in each transescent. The middle school, therefore, should represent "democracy in action" and its teachers should hold a strong belief in the dignity and worth of the individual. The transescent has a passion for justice, especially in his relations with adults, and the teacher who is so highly impressed with his perceived position of authority that he persists in directing rather than guiding will have difficulty establishing the rapport necessary for assisting the transescent in his search for self-identity. The middle school teacher should do more than pay lip service to the democratic ethic -- he should reflect it in his actions by stressing "equal rather than superior-inferior relationships; trust rather than fear; encouragement rather than force; freedom without license rather than obedience; cooperation rather than competition; challenge rather than threat; recognition rather than praise; self-discipline rather than punishment; and satisfaction rather than reward." He should treat the transescent as a responsible, independent person.

According to Combs, "...there seems to be four avenues by which students develop adequate beliefs about people: from the study of behavior; from personal experience of faculty beliefs and values; from the ways they are treated by the college staff; through personal involvement with children and adults." Therefore, the professional education curriculum for prospective middle school teachers should include a study of human behavior, should be highly personalized by allowing the student to take an active part in planning and evaluating his own program, and should provide many opportunities for students to work closely with transescents, classmates, and faculty members.

Ability to Interact Constructively with Others

The middle school teacher needs to get along well with those around him -- with his students, with parents, and with fellow staff members in planning and implementing learning experiences. The middle school is no place for teachers who are "loners" for the program is intended to break down classroom isolationism and to utilize a cooperative approach to teaching. Considerable faculty interaction and teacher-student interaction are necessary for promoting the middle school functions of integration and articulation. The guidance function demands that the teacher work harmoniously and intimately with transescents in assisting them to achieve a self-identity.

Because of this need to work closely with others, a sense of humor is a valuable asset to the middle school teacher. This personal quality is high on the list of most student polls. Transescents are notorious for joking and teasing, and the teacher who fails to see the humor of a situation will quickly become frustrated in working with these youngsters. The middle school teacher should serve as a model for the transescent development task of "relating to others."

An ability to interact constructively with others is closely related to the development of a positive view of self and a respect for the dignity and worth of others. In addition to facilitating the development of these personal qualities, the professional education curriculum should provide for training in the area of communication skills and the nature of group processes, and should utilize group problem solving activities whenever possible. The teacher aspirant should have continuing opportunities to develop group participation skills and group leadership skills both with his fellow students and with transescents. The prospective middle school teacher would especially benefit from an active participation in a team teaching situation.

Commitment to the Education of Transescents

A most important personal quality of a middle school teacher is a genuine commitment to the education of transescents. This quality involves an enthusiasm for working with this particular age group as well as a commitment to a middle school teaching career. In order to assist the transescent in the achievement of this developmental tasks, the middle school teacher must be sufficiently interested in the in-between-ager to accept his many idiosyncracies and characteristic ambivalence. He needs to establish a rapport with the transescent through a respect and sensitivity for his needs and resultant behavior. As Grooms points out in discussing middle school teacher specifications:

> There is one broad generalization: the middle school teacher must be a person who likes children. How do you identify such a person? No test can select such an individual with 99.99 percent level of confidence, but the kind of teacher needed by the middle schooler can be defined. He will enjoy students who are active, energetic and loud, and will take teasing in his stride. He will be flexible and sensitive to quick changes of moods and needs, and will sense group feeling and student interaction.

Middle school objectives will not be promoted by the teacher who pictures himself in the "minor leagues" (middle school) waiting for a shot at the "bit-time" (high school). The middle school will be simply another educational "stepchild" unless its teachers have a real interest in working with transescents and intend to devote their teaching careers to the education of these youngsters.

The professional education curriculum can only nurture and build upon an existant commitment to the education of transescents, for the teacher aspirant must make his own choice about the level of education in which he will prepare to teach. However, this choice may be influenced considerably if, as Alexander suggests, teacher education students should be provided with opportunities to become familiar with programs and students at all levels of the educational ladder before deciding on one level in which to specialize.

Those responsible for middle school teacher education need to maintain an active recruiting program, selecting outstanding teacher prospects, familiarizing them with middle school philosophy, and providing them with opportunities to visit exemplary middle schools and to have personal contact with transescent students and with dedicated middle school teachers. Students in the middle school teacher education program should make up a clearly identifiable group, and this group should have frequent opportunities to share experiences with each other and with experienced middle school teachers.

PROFESSIONAL ABILITIES

General Professional Abilities

The middle school teacher shares with teachers at all levels the need for skills and understandings related to the following areas: Nature of the American Educational Enterprise. In order to promote continuity in the total school program and to foster a commitment to the teaching profession, the middle school teacher needs to have a clear understanding of the nature of the American educational enterprise; he needs to deal with the realities of the social scene and the relationships of these realities to the social mission and tasks of today's schools; he needs to be familiar with the issues currently facing educators and how American education is reacting to internal and external pressures; he needs to understand American organizational patterns for education and their curricula; he needs to be able to identify with the teaching profession and the goals of the American educational system; and he needs to develop an active, rather than passive, point of view toward teaching. It is especially important that the middle school teacher understands the nature of the elementary and high school programs as well as that of the middle school so that the middle school might serve effectively its role as a transitional institution.

In order to understand more fully the nature of the American educational enterprise, and to develop an identification with the teaching profession, the prospective teacher would profit from a variety of experiences in various types of school systems and many opportunities to establish associations with career teachers. These firsthand experiences with schools and school personnel can make a classroom study of the educational enterprise more meaningful and personal to the teacher aspirant, and can also provide basis for decisions regarding specialization in a particular level of the school ladder.

Nature of the Learner. The middle school teacher needs to have an accurate perception of the nature of the learner -- his behavior and the factors which affect that behavior. He needs to understand the various patterns of human growth and development, including such factors as physical growth, social attitudes, sexual maturation, and intellectual and emotional development. He needs to be aware of the uniqueness of the individual learner and needs to be skilled in the ability to determine the needs and interests of this learner. He should have an understanding of the developmental task concept and of the persistent problems that are characteristics of particular age groups. He should be able to see the hidden emotional needs which underlie the overt behavior of the learner. Such understandings allow the teacher to see his role more clearly and to arrange learning experiences appropriate for his students.

The prospective teacher develops accurate perceptions about the nature of the learner through a simultaneous blending of didactic study and personal contacts with the learner. The usual manner of studying the learner theoretically in various courses for reference in future practical experiences is inadequate and represents a piecemeal approach to the study of human development. The prospective teacher needs continuing opportunities to observe and work with learners while he is studying the various theories of human behavior and development. Such an approach makes coursework more meaningful and fosters a sensitivity for the needs and interests of the learner. Again, these first-hand experiences should be with learners at all levels of the educational ladder in order to promote continuity in the educational program and to serve as basis for a selection of a particular level for specialization.

Nature of the Teaching-Learning Process. The middle school teacher should have an understanding of the various theories of the teaching-learning process to use as a basis for the development of an approach to teaching that is appropriate for him. It is apparent that there is no one narrowly defined pattern of "good" teaching, and it is also apparent that each student has his own unique learning "style." As Denemark points out in discussing the teaching-learning process:

> The infinite variability among humans and the impact of different social and cultural factors upon both teacher and learner evidence a process that is complex, calling for continuing assessment of a wide range of interacting variables by well-prepared, flexible professionals.

The middle school teacher must recognize that he must be a continuing student of this complex teaching-learning process, constantly engaged in evaluation and reconstruction of his theory of instruction. In order to individualize instruction more effectively, the teacher needs to realize that learning is "a personal discovery of meaning by the student, a highly personal matter involving the way he sees himself and his experience."

The student of the teaching-learning process also is best approached through a simultaneous blending of theory and practice. For too long teacher education students have taken courses and read books about teaching and learning without ever really coming to know and understand learners and without discovering how to use the knowledge they have acquired about learners while working with them in the classroom. Such wisdom can better be acquired when the prospective teacher is working directly with students while he is studying the theoretical aspects of the teaching-learning process. In such an arrangement the theoretical concepts studies have real meaning for the teacher aspirant, and he can use them in constructing his own theory of instruction.

Nature of Group Processes. Since the middle school teacher must continually work with groups of students and teacher colleagues, it is important that he has a working knowledge of the nature of group processes. He needs to understand group dynamics and the patterns of group interaction in various situations and at different maturity levels. He should be able to foster the development of group participation skills in his students and to provide each student with leadership opportunities. He needs to be able to analyze group needs as well as individual needs within a group. Group problem-solving, student-teacher planning and evaluation, and the structuring of groups for learning should be understood and practiced. For the middle school teacher, an understanding of group processes is especially important in the effective utilization of the flexible schedule, recognition of peer

group structure and behavior, promotion of the achievement of the developmental task of relating to others, and participation as a contributing member of a teaching team. With students and teacher colleagues, the middle school teacher must be able to "participate in group planning, to expedite the outcomes of such planning, and to help groups overcome obstacles in their cooperative efforts."

An understanding of the nature of group processes and skills in group participation and leadership is developed through a study of group dynamics, participation in various group situations, and coordination of the group efforts of learners. The professional education curriculum, therefore, should include a study of the various theories and researches relating to group processes and should utilize small group discussion and the seminar approach whenever possible. Also, there is no substitute for continued experiences with groups of students, both in school and in out-of-school activities.

Nature of educational research and evaluation. The middle school teacher should see himself as an investigator in the educational process. Such an approach to teaching fosters continued professional growth, increased participation in curriculum planning, and a resultant commitment to the educational program. In order to provide "home-grown" solutions to educational problems, the teacher should be skilled in the use of educational research and evaluative procedures so that his investigations are based on sound problems-solving methodology. For the middle school teacher involved in a program committed to innovative approaches such skills are especially important. The middle school teacher needs to evaluate constantly the innovative practices being used in terms of middle school objectives, and he needs to be able to design new approaches to facilitate the achievement of these objectives. As a teacher-counselor he must be able to make evaluative decisions regarding the developmental task performance of individual students. This type of evaluation requires skill in the collection of data relating to the student and in the utilization of these data in drawing valid conclusions for program planning.

The study of research and evaluation techniques should come early in the professional education curriculum so that the prospective teacher can utilize a scientific approach to his professional training. Too often these topics are either not taught at all or are taught as one of the last courses in the professional sequence. The prospective middle school teacher should begin early his continuing role as an investigator of the educational process.

Nature of the major fields of knowledge. The prospective middle school teacher needs a broad understanding of the major fields of knowledge and their interrelationships. This broad understanding promotes the integration of learning areas in the middle school program and contributes to a continuation of necessary learning skills and stimulation of student interests. In guiding the transescent's pursuit of special interests the middle school teacher should be able to draw upon concepts from these major fields of knowledge as resources for solving particular problems. The middle school teacher who is a member of an interdisciplinary team should have an understanding of the basic concepts of each of the learning areas represented so that a truly integrated team approach can be utilized.

A basic understanding of the major fields of knowledge may be acquired in a college general education program. Such a program usually takes up the greater portion of the student's first two years in college. Unfortunately, this program generally emphasizes subject matter as an end in itself, seemingly aiming for the student to become a specialist in each of the fields and failing to present the integrative relationships of the various disciplines. The prospective middle school teacher should be able to synthesize these fields of knowledge as resources for problem solving, and since the general education program does not develop this ability, provisions for doing so should be included in the professional education curriculum. Early identification of prospective middle school teachers while they are in their general education program, and the development of a closer working relationship between teacher training programs and the general education program could very well lead to the solution of this problem. In the professional education program, the teacher aspirant should study the techniques of drawing from the major disciplines for problem solving both in didactic coursework and through firsthand experiences in assisting youngsters with the solution of problems.

Specialized Professional Abilities

The middle school teacher should have specialized skills and understandings related to the following areas:

Nature of the transescent. "In reality, it is the nature of the middle school student that differentiates teaching in the middle school from teaching at any other level of the school ladder." It is important, therefore, that the middle school teacher be thoroughly familiar with the nature of the transescent. He should have a clear understanding of the developmental tasks of transescence and their relation to physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development. In order to assist the transescent in his search for self-identity, the middle school teacher needs to have a sensitivity for the needs of this youngster and be able to discover and understand his perceptions.

The development of an understanding of the nature of transescence needs to be accomplished not only in more extensive and thorough didactic courses but also on an action level from the very beginning of the professional sequence. The prospective middle school teacher should have continuing associations with the transescent in many different situations, both formal and informal. He must study carefully the behavior of this youngster, using a scientific approach, and establishing a sensitivity for his needs and interests. Associations with the transescent in informal situations often will allow the prospective teacher to understand more fully the perceptions of this youngster and the reasons for his behavior. Such understandings are essential for the promotion of middle school functions and objectives.

Nature of the middle school program. The middle school teacher should have a clear understanding of the functions and objectives of the American middle school and the nature of the educational program designed to promote the achievement of these functions and objectives. He needs to be familiar with the instructional practices that show most promise in assisting the transescent in the achievement of each of his developmental tasks and the organizational structure in which these practices can be implemented most effectively. Only with teachers who fully understand and are committed to middle school philosophy will this educational organization achieve its status as a distinct and respected unit of the educational ladder.

The prospective middle school teacher can best develop an understanding of the nature of the middle school program by studying with those who are most familiar with the middle school and its operation and by continued practical experiences in exemplary middle schools. He should have various types of teaching related responsibilities in middle schools as part of a teaching team and have opportunities for close associations with successful and committed middle school teachers.

Role of the teacher-counselor. In order to function effectively in the middle school program, the middle school teacher's role must be that of a teacher-counselor. Therefore, he must have the ability to utilize the most promising counseling and guidance techniques.. This does not mean that he must replace the guidance specialist, for the middle school teacher must work cooperatively with the guidance specialist to achieve the middle school guidance function. He will have direct counseling responsibilities for his "home base" group with whom he will be expected to perform such duties as:

1. Provide a secure and comfortable home base environment for the assigned group;
2. Provide personal and educational guidance;
3. Plan and evaluate individual programs;
4. Coordinate all of the many parts of the total educational program for the students in the assigned group;
5. Develop with pupils a program of self-knowledge and understanding of the nature of adolescence.

Since the main objective of the middle school programs is to assist the transescent in his search for self-identity, guidance must be an integral part of instruction. The middle school teacher should be able to diagnose the needs of the transescent with respect to his developmental tasks and suggest learning experiences that will promote the achievement of these tasks. Since each middle school teacher is expected to promote the achievement of each developmental task, he needs to be familiar with the areas most closely related to these tasks, such as the expanded concepts of physical education and sex education.

The prospective middle school teacher should have many opportunities to work with both individual transescents and small groups in order to understand better the nature of this youngster and to explore methods of establishing a helping relationship with him. There is no one best way to accomplish this relationship and the teacher aspirant must discover for himself which approaches work best for him. This suggests that the teacher training institution should provide many personal contacts with transescents beginning early in the professional curriculum.

Individualization of instruction. The flexibility of the middle school program, although a definite asset in individualizing instruction, places new demands on the teacher of the transescent. The flexible schedule is effective only if the middle school teacher is able to organize instructional settings appropriate to the varying needs of his students. Knowledge of instructional arrangements that are appropriate for a particular learning experience is important in effectively individualizing instruction. The interdisciplinary or subject areas team member needs to be able to cooperatively plan, implement, and evaluate learning experiences from day to day for the provided block of time. He faces the task of individualizing instruction without a greatly reduced pupil-teacher ratio. Only through use

of flexible scheduling and grouping practices and effective use of resources can this be accomplished. The middle school teacher should know when it is most appropriate to use large group instruction, small group instruction, or independent study, and which criteria for grouping are appropriate for the learning experiences at hand. He needs to be skilled in effective utilization of auxiliary personnel and specialists and in the use of technical devices for instruction. As a "home base" teacher he must be able to coordinate individual learning programs.

In the professional education curriculum a problem-solving approach should be utilized in the study of individualizing instruction. In both coursework and actual school situations, the prospective middle school teacher should work at solving the problems of providing for the individualized needs of transescents. Since there seems to be a great deal of truth in the notion that teachers teach the way they are taught, professional education instructors should utilize whenever possible those practices of organizing for instruction that are used in the middle school. If prospective teachers are trained by the methods they will eventually use, they will be more likely to have a better understanding of them. Too often those responsible for the training of teachers ignore the very instructional techniques they profess to be so effective. There is no reason why team teaching, flexible grouping and scheduling, independent study, and continuous progress cannot be as effective in the education of teachers as it is in the education of middle school pupils.

Teaching of continued learning skills. An important responsibility for the middle school teacher is to assist the transescent in developing learning skills which will enable him to explore and pursue his interests and to become an independent learner. Every middle school teacher needs to be familiar with the techniques of teaching the communication skills of reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Instruction in these areas can best be accomplished through a coordinated effort of teaching in all learning areas, and of course, should be personalized as much as possible. This approach demands that each middle school teacher be competent in diagnosing problems in communication and in prescribing learning activities to correct these problems. Another learning skill that must be taught is problem-solving and reflective thinking. This skill should be nurtured by teachers in each learning area so that students do not associate problem-solving with only one or two learning areas as is often the case. The middle school teacher should also be able to assist the transescent in developing a valuing process, and in fostering self-evaluation and self-direction in learning. As Rodgers points out:

> Teachers must accept the responsibility for teaching techniques which will help youngsters to help themselves. In a real sense there is little choice in the matter since the quality of life for a large segment of our society may very well be dependent upon our ability to teach the young to make rational decisions and to continue to learn and to adapt to new ways of relating to environmental conditions. This is the real challenge to those who propose to teach the young to be self-directing and independent.

In the professional education curriculum, the teacher should be trained in the techniques of teaching communication skills. He should have practical experiences in diagnosing communication problems and in developing increased proficiency in communication skills. He should study the ways in which communication skills can be developed in his

subject area specialty. In continuing personal associations with transescents, he should explore various approaches for developing the continued learning skills of valuing, problem-solving, self-evaluation, and self-direction. Through this type of exploration the teacher can identify the methods of teaching continued learning skills that are most successful for him.

Subject field specialization. Although extreme subject field specialization is not necessary for the middle school teacher, specialization in one broad field or two related areas is desirable and practical in promoting the functions and objectives of the middle school. Such broad fields or subject area combinations as language arts, social studies, science, foreign language, physical education-sex education, art-industrial arts, and art-home arts, would seem appropriate for the middle school teacher. This approach would not only enhance the effectiveness of the team operation but also promote integration, articulation, and exploration in the middle school program. The middle school teacher should know the structure of the disciplines in which he specializes and should be able to utilize the disciplines as stimuli for assisting the transescent with developmental task achievement.

Preparation in subject areas should begin as early as possible in the prospective middle school teacher's college career. Although much of this preparation must take place outside the college of education, there should be opportunities for the prospective teacher to study his subject field specialty in terms of its significance for transescent needs. As Schoeppe suggests:

> ...there must be more professionalization of subject matter so that the novice teacher may learn better to offer a psychological approach to subject matter -- one that will be appealing to typical adolescents -- and help the youth gradually internalize it to a skill level.

The prospective middle school teacher should have many opportunities to try various approaches of relating his specialty to transescents and to serve as a resource person to the transescent that has a special interest in a particular discipline.

Summary and Implications

Middle school teacher competencies based on the nature of transescence and the middle school program can be classified as personal qualities and professional abilities. Personal qualities are those traits, attitudes, and values that characterize an individual while professional abilities are those skills and understandings considered necessary for effective teaching. The personal qualities that have special significance for the middle school teacher are:

1. Positive view of self.
2. Flexibility and creativity.
3. Respect for the dignity and worth of the individual.
4. Ability to interact constructively with others.
5. Commitment to the education of transescents.

Desirable professional abilities can be considered as general or specialized. those professional abilities shared with teachers at other levels are related to the following areas:

1. Nature of the American educational enterprise.
2. Nature of the learner.
3. Nature of the teaching-learning process.
4. Nature of group processes.
5. Nature of educational research and evaluation.
6. Nature of the major fields of knowledge.

Professional abilities especially important for middle school teachers are related to the following areas:

1. Nature of the transescent.
2. Nature of the middle school program.
3. Role of the teacher-counselor.
4. Individualization of instruction.
5. Teaching of continued learning skills.
6. Subject field specialization.

These inferred competencies represent the goals of the middle school teacher training program. The suggestions made for eliciting these competencies provide direction in determining what should be the nature of a program of preservice education for middle school teachers.

Teacher Education Advisory Council
Task Force on the Middle School

Reported by Jack Gant

Dr. Bert L. Sharp, Dean of the College of Education at the University of Florida and Chairman of the Middle School Task Force of the Florida Teacher Education Advisory Council, introduced the members of the task force as follows:

Dr. William Alexander, Professor, College of Education, University of Florida
Dr. Wilson C. Atkinson, Member of School Board, Broward County, Fort Lauderdale
Dr. Joseph W. Crenshaw, Assistant Commissioner, Division of Curriculum and Instruction, Department of Education
Samuel Hardwick, Principal, Southside Junior High School, Jacksonville
Dr. Robert O. Lawton, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, Florida State University
Bruce McMillan, Director of Teacher Education, Florida Presbyterian College.

The TEAC Task Force was charged by the Council with the responsibility to develop guidelines for the preparation of programs for teachers of the middle school. The guidelines must apply to both preservice programs conducted by institutions and inservice programs conducted by local school systems or institutions.

The Council also charged the task force to develop the guidelines using the following criteria:

Criterion 1. Identification of Student Behaviors. The starting point in the development of guidelines is the identification of the desired behaviors for students. It is the intent of this criterion that the ultimate value of any preparation program should be in terms of what it accomplishes for students. For this reason, the Task Force on Middle Schools had to study carefully the characteristics and unique needs of the middle school child and then determine what the school can and should help this age child to accomplish.

Criterion 2. Identification of Competencies Needed by Teachers. Once Criterion #1 has been met and the desired student behaviors have been identified, the competencies needed by teachers to assist students toward these goals is a logical next step. Any preparation program -- preservice or inservice -- should be designed to develop certain skills, knowledges, and attitudes in the teachers to the end that the teachers will be in a position to help students develop the desired behaviors.

Criterion 3. Identification of Teacher Education Experiences Designed to Develop Desired Teacher Competencies. With Criterion #1 and #2 achieved, the experiences to be provided in the teacher education program now have more meaning. These experiences are justified on the basis of how they help

teachers develop the kinds of competencies which they will need in guiding the students toward the behaviors identified in Criterion #1.

Criterion 4. Procedures for Selection of Candidates for the Training Program. Inasmuch as all prospective teachers or teachers in service bring to the program different competencies, it is essential that some guidelines be developed for determining which persons should be admitted to the teacher education program. These guidelines must, of necessity, include strategies for determining which candidates in the program would also need which of the experiences planned. In middle school guidelines attention will have to be given to those persons who are already trained elementary teachers who would need a program to equip them to teach in the middle school and those teachers who are secondary teachers in the kinds of programs that they would need to equip them to teach in the middle school. The procedures for selection of candidates should take both of these kinds of personnel into consideration.

Criterion 5. Follow-up Plan on Effectiveness of Program Participants. In order for the program to be properly evaluated, the guidelines must provide for a follow-up plan which would determine how well the persons who had participated in the program had been able to develop the competencies, skills, and understandings needed in order to help students develop the identified desired behaviors.

Dr. Sharp reported that the task force had worked on Criterion #1, #2, and #3 and that another meeting was scheduled for August 5 and 6 to continue the development of the guidelines. This meeting is scheduled for the University of Florida during the week of a workshop for personnel of middle schools.

At Dr. Sharp's request, Mr. Gant, secretary to the Teacher Education Advisory Council, explained to the staff how the guidelines would be used once they were adopted by the Teacher Education Advisory Council. Upon adoption, the guidelines will be distributed to the following:

(1) Schools of education.

(2) Inservice education coordinators in each county school system.

(3) Members of the Division of Curriculum and Instruction of the Florida Department of Education.

(4) Director of Educational Personnel Development, Florida Department of Education.

(5) Division of Teacher Education, Accreditation and Certification.

(6) The Director of Education Improvement Expense.

The guidelines will be used as follows:

(1) By county school systems in developing inservice education components for teachers of the middle school.

(2) By the Teacher Education Section of the Florida Department of Education in approving teacher education programs for the preparation of middle school teachers at institutions.

(3) By the Director of Educational Personnel Development in the Florida Department of Education for approving components in the master plan for middle school teachers.

(4) By institutions in developing programs to train teachers of the middle school.

It was reported that the strategy of using guidelines for program development is designed to promote performance-based teacher education programs which will identify the kinds of competencies needed by teachers and design strategies for developing these competencies and procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of the program.

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL:
A Selected Bibliography

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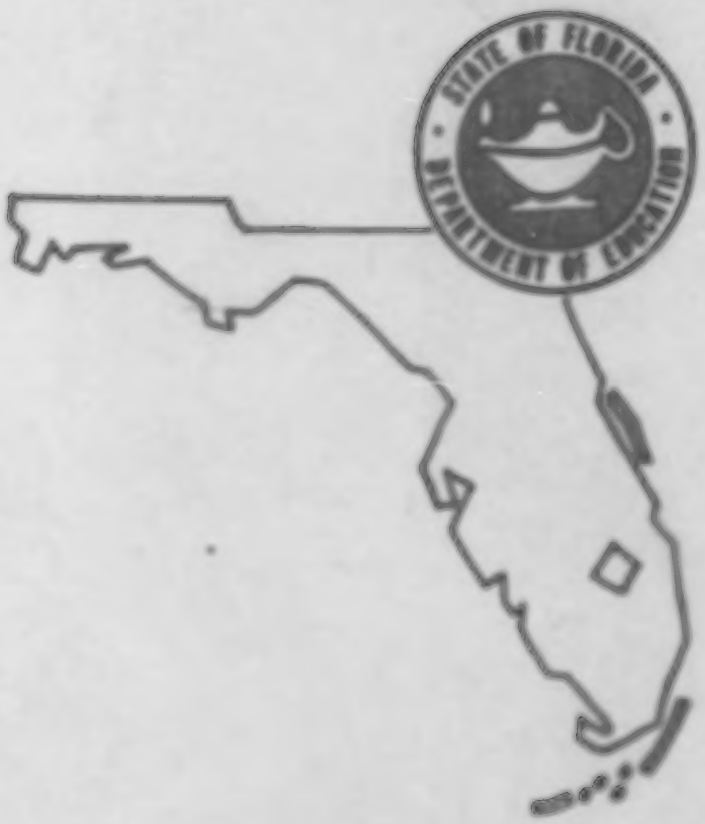

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